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Planning for Inclusion

By Lucy Kelly

How do you make Susan Hill's *The Woman in Black* accessible to a set 3 English class, who have completely lost interest in the text? This was the question I asked my English PGCE students at the start of a session on inclusion. They were also given the following information:

There are 26 in the group (16 boys/10 girls) and it is quite a weak set. One of your learners has mild Aspergers, another is extremely shy, and there are a number of silly boys! As well as this, you also have some very bright girls who don't always share their thoughts. This is week 4 and the group have completely lost interest. You had planned to continue reading in the next lesson because they have an assessment coming up, but you also know that you need to re-engage them. What do you do?

The reason I wanted my student teachers to think about this scenario was because it was one I was facing myself. As a secondary English teacher, I was teaching a new text that hadn't gripped the pupils in the way the department thought it would. Indeed, in a climate of new GCSE specifications featuring closed-book terminal exams, and Progress 8 where English is double-weighted, inclusion is more important than ever because, essentially, it is about enabling *all* learners to access a lesson and, therefore, make that all-important progress.

So, what is inclusion, and what does it mean to include all of our learners in a lesson? These were questions that I wanted to explore with the PGCE students, with a particular focus on planning. The aims of the lesson were to explore the terms 'inclusion' (including all learners in your lesson) and 'differentiation' (using planning to help you modify the product and process in order to meet the needs of your learners), and to gain confidence in planning differentiated and inclusive lessons.

As a starter, we discussed possible ways of re-engaging learners with the text; for example, comic strips, films, use of sound and drama. The student teachers were already thinking about moving away from the written word and using other forms of media to make the text appealing and, perhaps more importantly, accessible. Indeed, what I wanted my student teachers to start thinking about was that everyone learns in a different way, and that lesson planning needs to take account of this. As Trevor Wright acknowledges in his text *How to be a Brilliant English Teacher*: 'It's a matter of common sense that efficient teaching takes account of the varying personalities of those who are learning, but in practical and realistic terms, what are you meant to do?' (2012: 192)

To return to Hill's novel, *The Woman in Black* is a very wordy text; it is a pastiche of the Victorian ghost story and not a lot happens in it for quite some time. To a mixed ability year 10 English class, this is a problem because they lose interest very quickly. Therefore, other stimulus needs to be provided. However, another potential problem is that the film starring Daniel Radcliffe is very different to the text, but it is one that students are aware of so, at what point – if any – do you show them the film adaptation?

After pondering these questions, my job-share and I had taken the approach to read the entire novel with the students and to break it down, chapter by chapter, focusing on key themes and characters. In their Literature exam, students will be given fifty minutes to answer an essay question on Hill's novel, focusing on Assessment Objectives 1 ('Read, understand and respond to texts') and 3 ('Show understanding of the relationships between texts and contexts in which they were written') (Pearson, 2014: 15).

Students will not have time to read the novel from cover to cover again in class, so two terms were spent on the text, going through it in lots of detail in order to give students a thorough understanding of the text. Students were encouraged to complete chapter summary notes and build up a revision guide ready for year 11. Prior to reading the novel, we explored the term Gothic and thought about it as a genre. Lessons consisted of lots of close reading of key examples, with

practice writing PEEA (Point, Evidence, Explanation and Analysis) paragraphs. Writing frames and templates were used to support the students and modelling was incorporated throughout in order to bring the mark scheme to life. As well as exploring themes and characters, we also wanted students to understand the meanings of some unfamiliar words – e.g. 'blithe', 'reclusive', 'melancholy'. The context of the novel was obviously important and, as well as individual research lessons on context, we integrated context throughout the teaching of the text.

In terms of our Scheme of Learning, we were leading up to an assessment focusing on the supernatural, which would be completed in exam conditions. The question used a quotation from the text and then asked the students to look at Victorian attitudes to the supernatural. The question encouraged learners to think about Arthur's development as a protagonist and the effect this has on the reader. Implicit within the question was an awareness of the author's intentions – an area that the learners found difficult to grasp.

These 'real-life' planning issues were employed with my PGCE students to get them thinking about how to plan a lesson within a Scheme of Learning, leading up to an assessment on a text/topic that students weren't entirely confident with. Indeed, this is where inclusion and differentiation become paramount because, if you can plan a lesson that meets the needs of all of your learners, and is delivered in different ways, then you are more likely to hold the attention of your students and get to your destination. With this in mind, the student teachers were set the task of producing their own inclusion toolkit posters, which they could use as a checklist when planning their lessons. They were then set the challenge of trying to 'sell' them to a panel of judges. Working in groups, the purpose of the activity was for student teachers to think about possible resources available to them to help make texts, lessons and topics more accessible to their learners. As Wright brilliantly summarises: 'Think of the learning as a carousel; the pupils climb on from their different points, at different speeds, in different ways.' (196). Indeed, it was lovely to see the student teachers working together and really unpicking what it means to plan an inclusive lesson where all learners are included. Some beautiful posters were produced to 'sell' to

our panel of judges, and below is a list of what the student teachers thought the toolkit should contain:

- Have clear learning objectives and lesson outcomes: these can be differentiated using the terms 'all, most, some' so that all learners feel that they can access the lesson without the pressure of having to complete everything. As an alternative, you could create a competitive atmosphere in the classroom by adopting a challenge system of 'gold, silver, bronze'. The learners can pick the challenge that they feel most suits them and the challenges could be linked to certain skills/AOs. This method can work particularly well with boys and you can set up the lesson in a motivational way where positive language encourages learners to, perhaps, step outside of their comfort zone. Indeed, in a text like *The Woman in Black* where certain parts of the text are a little dry, this is a way of motivating learners to read the text and demonstrate their understanding of it.

-Know your learners and what appeals to them: it is really important to spend time getting to know your learners so that you can build up a context statement/class profile and plan your lessons accordingly. As well as using IEPs and school data, you could record any key observations on your mark-sheet in the early stages, and then use this information to help you plan future lessons. Whilst teaching *The Woman in Black*, I discovered quite early on that my learners enjoyed drawing activities so I made sure that I used these at regular points. Additionally, your class list could be used to record contributions in the lesson so that you can see which learners like to answer questions and which, perhaps, need a little more encouragement.

-Plan for peer-assisted learning: encourage your learners to help each other. This could be carried out through pair work – for example a research task on the context of Hill's novel – or through peer-assessment activities. This method of learning encourages students to develop their speaking and listening skills and, in turn, articulate their understanding of the text. Furthermore, high ability pupils could be used as 'Experts' and circulate to support other learners.

-Break lessons down into manageable chunks: give your learners an overview – or 'menu' – of the lesson at the start so that they can see the journey they are about to embark upon and, perhaps, tick the activities off as you proceed through the lesson. Furthermore, make links to the 'bigger picture' (i.e. the forthcoming assessment). In my experience, learners are much more likely to engage with a lesson if they can see the relevance of it. Furthermore, if they can see that a lesson has been divided into different components and that everyone's way of learning has been accounted for, then learners will be more willing to participate. My school has adopted a LEARN system, which means that the starter activity ('Link') links in with the rest of the lesson, as well as previous lessons. 'E' is for 'Establish', which ensures that learners understand the direction of the lesson and any key terms or other important/relevant information, before moving into the 'Achieve' section, which centres upon the main learning activity. The lesson finishes with a 'Review' task and a glimpse of the following lesson in the 'Next Steps' part. Personally, I feel that a lesson doesn't always fit this neat acronym and that, actually, having 'Review' activities interspersed between 'Establish' and 'Achieve' sections that refer back to the Learning Objective(s) at regular points can work really well. Indeed, the purpose of LEARN is simply to make sure that the necessary components of a lesson are included.

-Use lots of resources and adapt these accordingly: when planning and making your resources, make sure that you think about the font and size, colour, if additional technology is needed, and the background of your PowerPoint slides. You cannot think that one photocopy will meet the needs of all of your learners. Indeed, it might be that you need five copies of it in cream for your dyslexic learners and one copy of it enlarged to A3 using Comic Sans font for a learner who is visually impaired. This is where getting to know your learners is vital. Furthermore, it might be that one of your dyslexic learners prefers reading from pink so, as well as photocopying resources onto pink, you might want to think about changing the background of your PowerPoint slide to pink so that they can read the information more easily. Finally, one of your learners might be

using a laptop in the lesson, so make sure that any resources are emailed to him/her in advance. Phew!

-Use clear success criterias for tasks and encourage learners to help in the writing of these: when teaching *The Woman in Black*, we spent lots of time writing PEEA paragraphs in preparation for the assessment and I definitely found that using clear success criterias and writing these together helped. Indeed, we made sure that the success criterias linked to the Assessment Objectives so that learners were starting to familiarise themselves with what they would be assessed on in the real exam. Furthermore, these success criterias can be used in self/peer-assessment activities and can help learners to set their own targets for future lessons. Additionally, you, as their teacher, can use the success criterias to identify the gaps in their learning and plan forthcoming lessons accordingly.

-Use a range of 'stretch and challenge' tasks in a variety of different formats so that all learners can have a go at some point over the term/unit: make sure that not all of your stretch and challenge/extension activities are writing tasks. Think about using drawing activities, debate or research tasks. This will create an atmosphere of inclusion and, as well as this, motivate all learners to complete their work.

-Plan in key questions on your lesson plan as an AfL tool: think about the 'hinge points' of your lesson and plan a question for each of these. Furthermore, think about who you would like to ask these questions to. It might be that you want to check that all learners have understood the key events of a chapter so a comprehension question could be asked to a lower ability student but, later on in the lesson, you want your learners to consider the development of Arthur Kipps' character so you ask a 'why' question to one of your more able students.

-Plan for different types of tasks: as you are planning your lesson, check that you have a mixture of independent, paired and group activities. Encouraging learners to complete activities in different ways will create pace and interest, as

well as establishing an atmosphere where learners are encouraged to support and help each other.

-Give learners a choice of task: learners could meet the LO in one of three ways and this would mean, not only that learners take responsibility for their learning, but that they achieve their full potential because they are not being made to complete an activity in a format that they find difficult. Indeed, if learners are given an element of choice then they are more willing to complete the task because they are in control. This method definitely helped me when teaching *The Woman in Black*. I would allow learners to pick from a choice of three activities that, although different in format, met the same objective. So, for example, in a lesson on the importance of the setting of Eel Marsh House, learners could write a PEEA paragraph to answer a question, draw Eel Marsh House and the surrounding area, or rehearse a scene where Arthur Kipps is being interviewed by a journalist after he has spent the night there.

-Adopt a positive teaching style with clear expectations: make sure that, when planning, your expectations for the lesson are clear – perhaps these can be reiterated at the start – and that there are regular opportunities to reward your learners. A lot of my male students were reluctant to read *The Woman in Black* so I used the school's system of 'Positives' to encourage them to have a go and it certainly helped! Furthermore, think about the language being used both verbally, and on written material. I decided to use the term 'Challenge' rather than 'Extension' because it was more motivational.

-Rotate your seating plan and use different table arrangements: encourage learners to work together and do not be afraid to change your seating plan at regular intervals as you get to know your learners. Indeed, only by moving learners around will you be able to identify good/bad pairings and those learners needing a little more support. In terms of table arrangements, it might be that certain lessons centre on group work and, therefore, islands would work better; however, it might be that in a mock assessment lesson you choose to set the classroom up as if it were an exam, using exam conditions.

-Plan for LSA support: work together and make sure that your LSA is in your lesson plan. Who are they going to work with, for example? Identify key learners who would benefit from more support and ensure that this is noted down on your lesson plan. Find time to talk to your LSA before the lesson and send a lesson plan/resources to them in advance so that they can prepare fully. Additionally, make time to talk to your LSA at the end of the lesson so that you can receive feedback: it might be that the way an activity was delivered was difficult for one of your learners and, therefore, changes will need to be made for the next lesson.

-Use ICT in the classroom: don't be afraid to use video/film clips, sounds, research, PowerPoint, interactive quizzes (e.g. Kahoot!) in your lesson. Reluctant writers might benefit from typing their responses, or speech software could help students with poor pen control to get their ideas down. Furthermore, dividing two writing tasks up with a video clip provides learners with a different stimulus and is a visual break. Using the film version of *The Woman in Black* offers learners the opportunity to see the text brought to life and to evaluate the changes made between text and screen.

-**Encourage learners to be reflective and set their own targets:** use self-evaluation strategies to enable your students to see – and reflect on – their progress in a lesson. You may want to do this at the start, middle and end by returning to your Learning Objectives or success criteria for a task. You could use a traffic light system, numerical line or pictures. Not only will this help learners to take control of their learning, but it will also help you to direct your support. Furthermore, evaluating your students' reflections and their self-assessment will help in your planning of forthcoming lessons.

-Make sure that you lesson has plenty of scaffolding/modelling: be brave and have a go at 'live' modelling; this will enable you to stretch your more able learners and show your whole class the process as well as the product.

Furthermore, it will demonstrate to your class that writing takes time: it's okay to make mistakes and revise your response.

-Use effective questioning: move from 'what' questions to 'how/why' questions. This could build up over the duration of the lesson(s). Additionally, think of suitable questions for each learner, depending on their individual needs. You could colour code your class list using, perhaps, Bloom's Taxonomy and then update this as you work through the unit.

-Use key words: develop learners' vocabulary/understanding of a text or topic by having a key word for each lesson and integrating this into your plan. Learners can note these key words down into their books and, by the end, they will have built up a glossary of key words for a particular topic/text. This was very useful for *The Woman in Black* as learners need to use – and be confident with – subject terminology in their assessments in order to access the higher levels.

-Include mini-plenaries: don't leave the plenary until the end of the lesson. Having mini-plenaries interspersed throughout the lesson can be motivational as students can tick off particular Learning Objectives. These mini-plenaries can use a range of AfL strategies where learners are encouraged to reflect on their own progress – for example, traffic light system, quizzes and post-it notes. This will help you, as their teacher, to know if they are ready to more onto the next stage of the lesson, or whether they would benefit from spending a little longer on a task.

-Give instructions in a variety of different formats: make sure that instructions are given orally, graphically and pictorially. Furthermore, ask learners to repeat instructions back to check their understanding. Indeed, it could be that learners do not understand a task because of the language you used. You might want to think about asking a learner to write the instructions down for you so that you can ensure all learners are clear of your expectations and clarify any uncertainty. Furthermore, think about adopting a system of

certain images for particular tasks; these could be decided on at the start of the school year/unit. Linked to this, using pit-stops (checkpoints) during activities will enable you to check understanding of a task, assess progress and direct support before it is too late.

In conclusion, this was a really wonderful session to lead with the student teachers. It ended with them feeling confident and wanting to step outside of their comfort zone and plan lessons in slightly different ways. Differentiation and inclusion are, essentially, about providing learners with the tools to meet their full potential, and isn't this what all teachers want? As Mike Fleming and David Stevens note in their book *English Teaching in the Secondary School: Linking Theory and Practice*: 'It is not overly romantic or far-fetched to recognise that most human beings are capable of brilliance given the right context and motivation' (2010: 243).

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